4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

of the back which gives an extraordinary radius of action. In the squatting position the body is suspended from the knee joints; in this posture also women have a big radius of action, and the flexibility of the knee joint is retained to a ripe age. I once saw a 70 year old woman whose body was as supple as that of a young girl.

Working positions on the floor with outstretched legs are only used exceptionally, when the feet are to be used to retain one end of a rope to be plaited or a tape for the waistband.

I saw the squatting working posture transferred to an ordinary chair when my interpreter sat on her haunches on the seat of the chair with her needle work resting on her drawn up knees.

The tailor posture is often used by men when resting in the large, clumsy sofas, the loose cotton covers of which furnish clear evidence of the many naked feet that have been placed on them. When sitting on the floor furniture is often used as a back rest instead of a wall.

The great suppleness of the hip joint or the loose ligaments are the reason why, when wearing European summer dresses, the Kurdish women in Sulaimani sitting on chairs in Western fashion often forget command of their legs, which fall out to the side in a straddle.

Pains in the back occur and attempts are made to get rid of it by massage, or, in bad cases, by treading on each other. The woman suffering from the complaint lies doubled-up on the floor and another steps onto her back. This complaint may be due to long hours of work, for example baking, in a tailor's posture.

It thus looks as though the back is strained on certain occasions by having to be kept upright in the tailor posture. On the other hand no case of stiff knees was seen as a result of a constant standing working position; nor did women suffer from thick legs, swollen or "difficult" feet.

The Kurds possess great plasticity of body. Resting positions are adopted in a completely relaxed manner and are of great static beauty.

Fig. 37. Working position.

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

DEATH

Hospitals, *nexweshxane*, are to be found in provincial towns like Halabja and Sulaimani and, of course, in the larger cities in the country. In Halabja I found that the male ward only had male nurses. In the villages there was no doctor, only, for example in Sargalu, a trained male nurse with a supply of medicaments for distribution[172]. In regard to the attitude to medical assistance, my interpreter's father refused to allow a doctor to be summoned or for any of the patients in the house to be taken by cab to see one, during the outbreak of Asiatic influenza in Sulaimani in 1957. In the same house my interpreter's mother refused to seek medical aid for rheumatic pains in the back and possibly fever. One of the daughters stood on her back whilst she lay huddled up on the floor and massaged her in this way. A child in Topzawa with fever, who was taken to the small hospital at Dokan on the following day, was the day previous undressed by an elderly woman and smeared over the whole body with freshly-churned butter.

The sick bed in the home is only used when the patient cannot stand up; even influenza patients in Sulaimani were taken on evening visits to the neighbours. For headaches they were given a bandage round the forehead[174], and sufferers often went to sleep in the house where there were guests, reappearing later in the evening. During the influenza epidemic, no measures were taken to isolate the eating and drinking utensils of the sick from those of the rest of the family. Spitting was much resorted to in the courtyard, on the clay roof and on the clay floor[175]. Broken arms and legs were ill tended, grew together badly, resulting in mis-shapen limbs, cases of which I observed with small children both in Sulaimani and Serkan. There was no snake serum in the villages. A harvester in Topzawa and a boy in Balkha who were bitten by snakes were taken by mule and later by hired car or bus a long distance to hospital for treatment. Spraying with DDT was used against vermin in the part of Kurdistan I visited. There letters painted on the walls of houses indicated that this had been done. According to Wilkinson, this spraying is done annually in the villages[176].

Neither the sick nor the dying were isolated even if it was possible to arrange a sickroom in the house.

Burial. No deaths took place among adults in the homes I stayed in in Kurdistan, but outside the mosque at Mirza Rastam I had an opportunity to study the two objects used for the washing and transportation of the dead. The one was an oblong, very large knee-high table with a very heavy top and thick legs on which the corpse was washed. This was lent out for three days to the home where death had taken place and was then returned to the mosque—an understandable arrangement as in this cultural pattern the table is not a settled institution, but an exception. By the side of this laying-out table stood a bier, an oblong, wooden crate with a flat base, low legs and two short carrying poles at each end. This also belonged to the mosque. On this the body, clad in an unseen costume and wrapped in the ceremonial, but without a coffin, was transported to the burial ground outside the town[177]. The same type is found in Arabia[178] and Egypt[179].

Two children's deaths, a little girl's and a little boy's, took place among the people I lived with. Even though it was a matter of a child's funeral I observed certain differences, which have their parallels in adult funerals. As soon as death had taken place the child was taken up from its cradle